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ABSTRACT

The lessons in this 10-day unit for high school sophomores are designed to: (1) acquaint students with terminology related to visual literacy; (2) enable students to make comparisons between drama for the theater and drama for film; (3) acquaint students with the basic structural elements of film such as movement, lighting, sound and music, editing, and composition; and (4) help students become more analytical film viewers. Following a rationale for film and television study in the secondary curriculum, an overview of the unit and the general objectives are given. Each day's lesson plan provides objectives, materials needed, and procedures for teaching which include discussion and worksheets. Lessons require the use of particular films and materials which are identified. The final lesson requires the viewing of a videotaped segment of a television situation-comedy as a test of the students' understanding of the concepts presented in the unit. This document is part of a collection of materials from the Iowa Area Education Agency 7 Teacher Center project. (JW)

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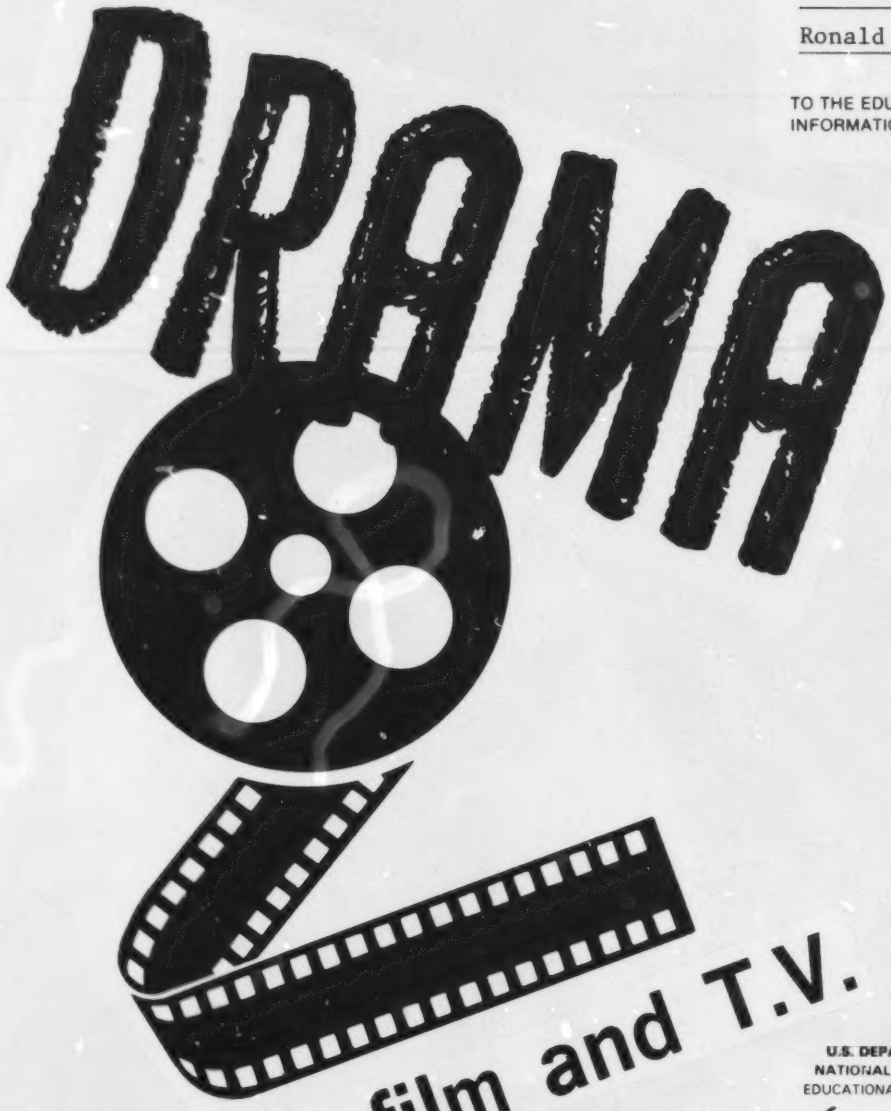

in film and T.V.

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A Brief Rationale for Teaching Film and T.V.

Before deciding whether television and film should be included in the secondary curriculum, the criteria used for any subject taught in the public school must be defined. Teachers, with very few exceptions, labor under the impression that the information and skills which they are teaching will either help the students survive in the real world or else increase their enjoyment of that world by introducing them to the richness of their own and others cultural heritage. Teaching film and television meets both of these criteria.

If the aim is to provide information and problem solving skills that the student will use in later life, then the discriminating use of television and film must be taught. The students need to be made aware of the techniques film makers and T.V. producers will use to persuade them to buy, shape their values, and influence their lifestyles. Critical thinking and informed discussion is essential to prepare students to function in a society dominated by the visual medium. As technology becomes increasingly available to the individual as a means of communication, language arts teachers have an obligation to help students develop competence in this area of communication as well as in reading, writing and verbal skills.

Although film and television are a relatively new phenomenon, they are very much part of the culture. Films reflect and define the culture of their times. Just as great books help the reader understand himself in relation to his/her cultural past and present, so do the film classics.

Once the necessity of teaching visual literacy has been determined, one can begin to think about the additional benefits of having film and television as part of the classroom setting. For one thing, it provides instant access into the interests of the students and can be used as a springboard to teach other communication skills. Everyone likes to talk about recently seen movies. Even students who are usually reluctant to participate in class discussion will enjoy giving their view of last

night's movie. Verbal skills will be practiced in the discussion. Because most films are essentially narrative, it is very easy for the leader to slip into a discussion of the plot. Students will readily identify characters and plot ingredients, such as climax and resolution, thus enhancing their understanding of written narration as well. Writing skills can be developed further by asking the student to write an essay comparing a movie version with the original book. Writing film reviews is another excellent way to get students writing about something in which they are interested.

As in teaching any other subject, there are problems. Limited funds to rent films and purchase equipment pose a problem in most school systems. Also film courses must vie for a place in an already crowded language arts curriculum. Perhaps the best solution is to integrate film and television into established classes. By careful searching, the teacher may be able to find sources from which to rent films inexpensively.

Regardless of the inherent problems, film and television are too important to be banned from the classroom. Just as other communication skills enhance the student's chances for living a satisfying and productive life, so does an understanding of the visual medium.

DRAMA IN FILM AND T.V.: An Overview of the Unit

This ten day unit is intended for high school sophomores who are of average language arts ability. The unit can be used in a mass media course, a general literature course, or a semester drama course. The unit would work best if used after students have studied drama for the theater and have been introduced to the various elements of drama with some attention paid to the process of play production.

In this unit the students will be given a brief history of film and then will be introduced to the major structural devices used in film. Key film terms will be defined and illustrated so that the student can intelligently discuss what occurs in a film. The differences between the writing and staging of a play for the theater and a drama for film will be explored. Through discussion of films viewed in class, students will become aware of the director's use of composition, lighting, editing, music and sound, and movement to present a theme, tell a story, or create a mood.

Students will be evaluated on class participation and their performance on the written exam at the end of the unit.

Each lesson plan for this unit is intended for a 50 minute class period with approximately 20 students. To make the unit useable, a special effort has been made to use only those films which are presently available from the Area 7 Education Agency, Cedar Falls, Iowa. Where needed, worksheets follow the lesson plan.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this unit is:

1. To acquaint students with the basic terms needed to be visually literate.
2. To enable students to make comparisons between drama for the theater and drama for film.
3. To acquaint students with the basic structural elements of film, such as movement, lighting, sound and music, editing and composition
4. To help students become more analytical viewers of film.

DAY 1

Topic: Introduction to the Unit

Objectives:

1. Students will have a clear understanding of what is expected of them during the unit.

2. Students will be able to identify some similarities between drama for the theater and drama for film.

Materials Needed:

No special materials needed.

Procedure:

1. Describe the general outline of the unit to the students. Explain how they will be evaluated for their work during the unit.

2. Have the students relate their favorite movie and/or the latest one they have seen. Discuss which ones have been made from plays or novels. Choose several movies they mention and have them give the story lines. Have them decide what the conflict is, and where the climax and resolution occur. If they are not already familiar with these terms through having used them in the discussion of plays for the theater, a careful definition will have to be given for each. Talk about some of the similarities between stage and film drama.

DAY 2

Topic: A Brief History of Film; An Introduction to Basic Film Terms

Objectives:

1. Students will gain some understanding of the beginning of motion pictures.

2. Students will be introduced to the five major structural devices of film -- movement, composition, lighting, editing and sound.

3. Students will learn to recognize and use enough terms to describe what happens in a film.

Materials Needed:

1. The film "The Art of Motion Picture" (F. A. Bailey, 1970, 20 minutes, color).

2. The film "Basic Film Terms -- A Visual Dictionary" (Pyramid Films, 1971, 15 minutes, color).

3. "Key Film Terms" worksheet.

Procedure:

1. Show the film "The Art of Motion Picture." After the film review the early forms of motion pictures. Review the structural devices as mentioned in the film: movement, composition, lighting, editing and sound.

2. Show the film "Basic Film Terms -- A Visual Dictionary."

3. Hand out the worksheet with key terms. Help the class begin to write definitions for each term.

KEY FILM TERMS

SHOT

SCENE

SEQUENCE

THREE KINDS OF MOVEMENT:

1. Movement before the camera (movies as theater)

   timing

   composition

   lenses: normal, wide-angle, telephoto, zoom

2. Movement by the camera

   traveling, tracking shots

   static shots

   freeze-frames

   pans, tilts, horizontal-vertical

   subjective shots

   angles: high, medium, low

   distance: CU, MS, LS

3. Movement between frames: editing, cutting, montage (18 (silent) or 24 (sound) theoretically possible)

   cutting on action, invisible cutting

   crosscutting

   matching action cut

   metaphorical cut

   dissolve, fade-in, out, iris shots, wipe, "normal" cut

   flashback, flashforward

DAY 3

Topic: Basic Film Terms continued

Objective:

Students will learn to recognize and use enough terms to describe what happens in a film.

Materials Needed:

1. "Key Film Terms" worksheet.

2. The film "The Great Train Robbery" (Blackhawk Films, 1903, 12 minutes, b&w).

Procedure:

1. Review terms studied yesterday. Help the students finish filling out the worksheet on film terms.

2. Show "The Great Train Robbery." After the first showing, discuss the techniques used. Run the film again and let the students pick out the various types of shots.

DAY 4

Topic: Review of Film Techniques; Differences Between a Film and a Play Script

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to pick out film techniques used in T.V. shows.

2. Students will become familiar with the terms and layout of a film script.

Materials Needed:

1. Videotape of MASH or any other sit-com.

2. Xeroxed copies of the first five pages of the film script of Twelve Angry Men from Film Scripts Two edited by George P. Garrett, O. B. Hardison, Jr. and Jane R. Gelfman (Meredith Corporation, New York, 1971, pp. 159-164). A copy is available in the University of Northern Iowa library.

3. Copies of the play "Twelve Angry Men" (found in many sophomore literature anthologies).

Procedure:

1. Review the terms of yesterday by showing a 15 minute segment from MASH, Stop the tape periodically and have the class identify the technique used.

2. Talk about the differences between a play script and a film script. Hand out copies of the first five pages of the script of Twelve Angry Men. Have the students compare it with the play "The Twelve Angry Men." Have them jot down as many differences as they can.

DAY 5

Topic: Screen Writing

Objective:

Students will understand some of the different aspects which need to be considered when writing a screen play rather than a stage play.

Material Needed:

The film "The Art of Film: Screen Writing" (Coronet, 1976, 24 minutes, color).

Procedure:

1. Begin the period by discussing the notes the students wrote the day before about the differences between the film script and the stage script of Twelve Angry Men.

2. Show the film "The Art of Film: Screen Writing." On the blackboard write the names of the films and their directors which are excerpted in the film (Oliver Twist, Metropolis, The 400 Blows, Pygmalion, and Ceasar and Cleopatra). Discuss the concepts presented in the film. The discussion guide included with the film provides some good discussion starters.

DAY 6

Topic: Music and Sound in Film

Objective:

Students will understand the importance and functions of sound and music in film.

Materials Needed:

1. Several records of instrumental music of differing moods.

2. The film "The Art of Film: Music and Sound" (Coronet, 1976, 21 minutes, color).

Procedure:

1. Begin the class by playing several selections of mood music. Have the students free write about the music. Do not identify the excerpts played.

2. Discuss what the students have written. How did the writing reflect the moods of the music? Talk about how directors use music to signal the mood to the viewers. How else do directors use music? When does it occur?

3. Show the film "The Art of Film: Music and Sound." Discuss the different uses of music and sound in the film clips shown in the film.

DAY 7

Topic: Acting in Film

Objective:

Students will be able to identify some of the differences between acting on stage and acting before the camera.

Materials Needed:

1. The film "The Art of Film: Performance" (Coronet, 1976, 20 minutes, color).

2. Handouts for the film "A Separate Peace."

Procedure:

1. Show the film "The Art of Film: Performance."

2. Discuss the excerpts on the film (Richard III, Summertime, The Gold Rush, La Strada). Have the students list any differences they noticed between acting on the film and the acting which would be done on stage. If discussion lags use the questions included with the film.

3. Spend time reviewing the concepts presented so far during the unit.

4. Hand out the critique sheet for "A Separate Peace" which they will be seeing tomorrow. Explain how you wish them to fill it out.

DAY 8

Topic: The film "A Separate Peace"

Objectives:

1. The student will have an opportunity to view a film somewhat more critically than previously.

2. The student will become aware of how the director makes use of composition, lighting, editing, music and sound, and movement.

Material Needed:

The film "A Separate Peace" (Aims Media, 1979, 45 minutes, color).

Procedure:

1. Remind students to bring their completed critique sheets to class tomorrow to share in class discussion.

2. Show the film "A Separate Peace."

A SEPARATE PEACE

1. Describe the action. What happened in the film?

2. What was the main meaning of the film? Were there any other ideas expressed?

3. Did the film change any of your own ideas? Did it reinforce them? How or why?

4. What were some of the techniques that the director used (that you remember especially clearly)? (Write on the back of this sheet.)

DAY 9

Topic: Discussion of "A Separate Peace"; Review

Objectives:

1. The student will gain a better understanding of the film "A Separate Peace" by sharing his/her impressions and listening to class discussion of the film.

2. The film terms and techniques of the unit will be reinforced by a verbal review.

Material Needed:

Overhead projector

Procedure:

1. Begin discussion of "A Separate Peace" by having several students share their writings on the first question on the review sheet. With the students' help make an action line on the overhead.

2. Continue discussion by listening to and discussing the answers to the rest of the questions on the critique sheet.

3. Spend some time talking about the test on the unit. Review concepts studied during the unit.

DAY 10

Topic: Evaluation

Objective:

The students will demonstrate their understanding of the concepts presented during the unit.

Material Needed:

A videotape of a 15 minute segment of a television sit-com.

Procedure:

1. Hand out answer sheets. For the first part of the test show the videotape of the sit-com. Stop at various points and ask the students to write down the technique used. When several techniques are used simultaneously, be careful to eliminate the ones you do not want the students to identify by saying something like, "In addition to a matching action cut, this is also a _____."

2. Proceed to the second part of the test which consists of two essay questions:

a. What is your all time favorite movie (or one you've seen recently and can remember well)? Why did you like it? Summarize the action briefly. What was the meaning of the film? What specific techniques did the director use to present the theme? (This discussion question will need to be evaluated on the thoroughness and perceptiveness of the discussion rather than accuracy since you may not have seen the movie discussed.)

b. Discuss the similarities and differences between drama for the theater and drama for film.